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Lambda Letters Project

32558

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6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, California 95608

Phone (916) 965-6851

Lambda Letters Auction Will Be a Blast!

Two terrific comedians, Karla Carmony and Tom Amiano (see their descriptions at right), have agreed to be guest auctioneers at this year's Lambda Letters Auction. This auction is going to be our most entertaining yet! We also hope you will make it our most successful fund-raiser ever. This year the proceeds will be divided between the Lambda Letters Project and River City Metropolitan Community Church.

Earlier this spring MCC had a disastrous fire resulting in over \$675,000 worth of damage to its Samaritan Center. MCC has been so supportive of Lambda Letters that our Board of Directors unanimously decided to share the profits of this year's auction with MCC to help them recover from the fire. We hope that you will join us at the Weintraub Gallery, 1723 J Street in Sacramento, from 3-5 p.m. on Sunday, May 15th. Bring something to auction and join in the bidding. We guarantee you will have a fantastic time!



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Karla Carmony

Raised in the Midwest on Jello and *The Bionic Woman*, vertically challenged stand-up comic Carmony performs at clubs throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and across the country. Karla also writes and performs for Bay Area KPFA radio's Women's Comedy Hour. She is currently one-third of This Side of Butch, a three-women comedy troupe that is touring with their latest work, *The Garden Variety Lesbian Variety Show*, a 90-minute show featuring skits, songs, videos, and lots of wigs.

A Berkeley resident for the past 12 years, Karla spends a great deal of her time trying to balance political correctness with her insatiable need for red meat.

Tom Amiano

Tom Amiano, "The Mother of Gay Comedy," has been a stand-up comic since 1980 when he pioneered gay comedy night at the Valencia Rose Cabaret in San Francisco. Since then he has appeared all over the country winning awards for his fast-paced topical humor. He has written and performed the critically acclaimed one-man shows, *Wrists* and *Wrists 2*, produced a wildly successful gay comedy extravaganza every year, founded the comedy group *Can't Keep a Straight Face*, and received rave reviews for his role in playwright Robert Patrick's *Poof Positive*.

In his spare time Tom was the top vote-getter in the 1990 San Francisco Board of Education race and has served as the Board's President. You may have seen him on PBS in *The Story of English* and *The Last Laugh*. Tom is also featured in the Oscar-winning documentary, *The Times of Harvey Milk*. He has also been profiled in the *New York Times* and was featured in an *Entertainment Tonight* segment.

Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

Last month	2,469 letters
This year	6,568 letters

Dollars Spent

Last month	\$1,298
This year	\$3,028

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and AIDS/HIV+ status advocacy and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and persons affected by or living with AIDS/HIV+ status into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Send changes of address (incl. name, new address, city, ZIP code, and phone number) to Lambda Letters Project, 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, CA 95608.

Lambda Letters Scoreboard

Here is an update on legislation that our members have written on in the past few months:

S.B. 1432 (Author, Don Rodgers-R): Among other things, would probably have eliminated anonymous HIV testing. Lambda Letters opposed this legislation. The bill failed in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. Could be reconsidered.

S.B. 2061 (Author, Gary Hart-D): Would allow government employees in the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) to enroll their domestic partners in their health insurance plans. Lambda Letters supports this legislation. Passed the Senate Public Employment and Retirement Committee. Next stop, the Senate Appropriations Committee. May have been voted on by that committee by the time you read this article.

A.B. 2810 (Author, Richard Katz-D): Would allow statewide registration of domestic partners. Lambda Letters supports this legislation. Passed Assembly Judiciary Committee. Next stop, the Assembly Ways and Means Committee.

Clarification

Last month this newsletter reported that a majority of the U.S. House of Representatives voted for the Hancock (R-Missouri) amendment which banned the distribution of funds appropriated by H.R. 6 to school districts with gay-positive programs.

That information is correct. However, one of our members from Los Angeles informs us that a later vote on the Unsoeld (D-Wash.) amendment may have nullified the effect of the above vote. The Unsoeld amendment states that "Nothing in [the Hancock amendment] is intended to be construed as asserting federal control over a school's curriculum." The Unsoeld amendment was passed by a vote of 224-194. In all, 196 Democrats voted for the Unsoeld amendment and 55 voted against it; 27 Republicans voted for the amendment and 139 voted against it.



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Further Attempts to Mandate HIV Antibody Testing

Conservatives and others (not all Republican, either) are again trying to mandate broader HIV testing for those accused or convicted of certain sex crimes. They have proposed two closely related bills that mandate this testing under questionable circumstances. A.B. 109X (Diane Martinez, D-Alhambra) is a particularly vicious piece of legislation because it applies to persons only charged with various sex crimes rather than those who have actually been convicted of these crimes. A.B. 2815 (Paula Boland, R-Granada Hills) expands the scope of sex crimes for which HIV testing could be ordered and includes oral sex and saliva as probable modes of transmission, both of which are questionable.

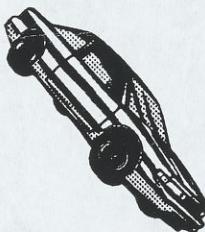
These bills would not let victims of sex crimes know their own HIV status, only the status of their accused aggressor at a particular point in time. Given both the time after exposure that it takes for a person to develop antibodies to HIV (and thus to test HIV-

positive), as well as the fact that every unsafe sex act does not result in HIV transmission, these bills would create more anxiety rather than give these crime victims real knowledge. In addition, both federal and state law already have sufficient judicial provisions for appropriate court-ordered testing of accused and/or convicted sex offenders. These bills would end up just adding a fiscal burden to already limited state and local funds.

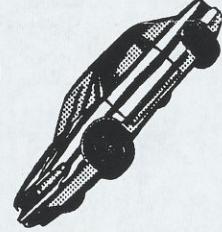
This month we are asking you to write to members of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, before whom both these bills will appear shortly.

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LLP Volunteer Classifieds

Pride Festival Volunteers—People from Fresno, Sacramento, or San Francisco needed to staff letter-writing booth. Will encourage passersby to sign our letters and become members. May use legislative directories to determine the legislators who represent people signing our letters. May solicit donations for the Project.

People of Color Issues Letter Composer—This person will, on a monthly basis, contact agencies to identify upcoming pieces of legislation or other topics relevant to people of color. (We can provide a list of contacts.) Will also compose the letter which is sent to the membership and write a newsletter article providing background information on the subject of the letter. Will also attend monthly staff meeting in the Sacramento area on the third Sunday evening of each month. People of color are encouraged to apply.

Persons interested in any of the above may send us their name, address, and phone number, or may call us at (916) 965-6851.

Advertising Rates

Business-card sized ads (3.5" x 2") \$10 per issue

Quarter-page ads \$20 per issue

Half-page ads \$30 per issue

Full-page ads \$50 per issue

**Send payment and your camera-ready copy,
along with your name and phone number, to:**

Lambda Letters Project

6212 Silverton Way

Carmichael, CA 95608

Deadline is the 25th of each month.

Commentary

In January we published a letter asking the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) to divest itself of the Cracker Barrel Company because of that company's discriminatory hiring practices with regard to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. One of our members wrote to us at the time saying that, in her view, divestiture was not the right approach. We invited her to create an article explaining her point of view. That article is as follows. We offer it in the spirit of free discussion of the issues facing our community.

How to Take Action Against Bigoted Companies

By *Betty Hornbostel*

Two years ago I read a letter to the editor of *Second Stone*, the bimonthly paper of gay religious news, that caught my attention. The writer said that if you really wanted to make a statement against the homophobic policies of Carl's Jr. and Cracker Barrel, you should buy their stock! What a concept!

I bought one share of Cracker Barrel at \$34.50 and three shares of Karcher at \$9. Those transactions totalled \$61.50. Add the cost of the trades through my low-cost broker, and my total cost was \$117.50. (I could have bought just one share of Karcher, but the cost was low, so I sprang for three.)

Each of these stocks pays a quarterly dividend; and so every three months I get a check from Cracker Barrel for \$.01 and a check from Karcher Enterprises for \$.06. I don't bother cashing them; it's more fun giving them away as souvenirs and thinking how much it costs the companies just to process them.

Last year Cracker Barrel split 3 for 2. Since I didn't have two shares to split, the company had to reissue me a stock certificate for one share and send a \$14.53 check for the fractional share I was due. That check I cashed.

Every quarter each company sends me a financial report. At the end of the fiscal year I receive a beautiful slick magazine, in full color, extolling each company's virtues. Each also sends me a thick notice of the annual shareholders' meeting along with my ballot to vote for directors and any pending issues. I dutifully mark the

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Issue

Changing the Community Relations Service Mandate

Attorney General Janet Reno has asked the Community Relations Service (CRS) of the Justice Department to intervene in the case of Camp Sister Spirit in Ovett, Mississippi, a lesbian educational and retreat center, as an exceptional case. The mandate of the CRS does include intervention in community disputes involving race, color, and national origin, but it does not yet include sexual orientation.

Our letter this month addresses the inclusion of sexual orientation within the policy mandate of the CRS. Harassment and hate crimes are not a rare exception in the case of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals and institutions, and law enforcement already recognizes hate-motivated crimes and harassment against our community. It is time that our community was protected by the letter of the law under the CRS of the Justice Department, and not be treated as a one-time-only case. Our letter is addressed to Representative Don Edwards (D-Calif.), who is Chair of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights. In it, we ask legislation to be introduced that would offer equal protection under the CRS mandate.

ballot and return it in the postage-paid envelope.

All in all, I feel good about the fact that I am costing Carl's Jr. and Cracker Barrel so much money. I wonder how many others have bought just one share. If many of them did, maybe the homophobes would get the message and get it right some day.

If you need information about this unique one-person/one-vote project, call me at (916) 662-8970; and if you do buy a share, tell the broker to have it sent to you. You can frame it and use it as a dart board. (Actually, since you might want to sell the share some day, it's better to make copies for dart boards. You can back them with cork, frame them, and use them for gifts.)

Betty Hornbostel is a retired teacher who now sells life insurance and retirement annuities. She is a leader of Yolo County Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), a mother of four (including a gay son), and a member of Lambda Letters.

Fighting Sweatshops

Please support A.B. 3374 (Klehs), a bill designed to protect sweatshop workers from exploitation and labor law violations. Sweatshops are usually industrial or garment facilities in which numerous employees are packed into cramped quarters and paid minimal wages for their manual labor.

Often sweatshop owners take advantage of their workers by paying subminimum wages, failing to provide overtime compensation, or by requiring employees who receive wage and hour settlements to sign their award checks over to the employer. These employees often have limited English-speaking skills and have little choice but to accept the poor and illegal working conditions forced upon them. The Asian Law Caucus is sponsoring this legislation because many Asian-Americans are particularly subject to exploitation in these types of facilities.

These violations of the labor laws also impact the state's revenue sources. By paying employees under the table, sweatshop owners cheat California out of thousands of tax dollars that are instead poured into the underground economy. This fraud costs the state over \$3 billion annually in lost income tax revenues.

This bill would address these problems by imposing stiffer penalties on these unscrupulous employers. More severe penalties are absolutely essential to deter abuse of wage and hour laws more effectively. This bill will not affect honest businesses that pay their workers an honest wage on a timely basis. In fact, it will level the playing field by eliminating the unfair competitive advantage enjoyed by sweatshop employers. This measure will thus reduce fraudulent and unfair practices in the workplace and improve the working conditions of sweatshop employees.

Legislation Sought to Help Children, Custodial Parents

Move-away cases present one of the most difficult and troubling child-custody issues in this state today. Typically, a married couple divorces and one parent is awarded primary physical custody of the couple's minor child(ren). At some point, as with many people today, the parent wishes to seek residence elsewhere—whether to find a job, to accompany a new spouse on a job transfer, to pursue educational opportunities, or to live near their original family.

This move necessarily alters the noncustodial parent's time spent with their child(ren). If the move is not permitted, custodial parents face the choice of being confined to the jurisdiction against their will or losing custody of their children if they move. Most parents cannot afford to pursue an appeal.

We thus urge you to sign this month's letter to your senator concerning S.B. 1350, the Child Custody Move Away Bill, whose purpose is to clarify and protect the right of a custodial parent—women, in the great majority of cases—to determine a child's residence, even if far from a noncustodial parent.

This bill is important because current interpretation of custody laws has resulted in many recent court orders that make it virtually impossible for custodial parents and their children to relocate after divorce if the noncustodial parent objects. This bill simply protects the best interests of the children, guarantees the rights of both parents, and preserves the custodial family. Only if it can be shown that a move is intended to frustrate a noncustodial parent's visitation rights will this bill allow him or her to challenge the custodial parent's relocation.

Portions excerpted from Bowermaster, Janet, "The need for move-away legislation in California," *J. Family Law*, 31(4), 1993.

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